

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

26 March 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE BOARD

SUBJECT: Dissenting Views to the Report of the Working
Group on Military Estimates

In my view, the proposals outlined by Mr. Clark's report constitute an insufficient departure from present practices. I propose a fourfold approach to the problem along the following lines:

I. A continuing book on Soviet/EE military strengths and capabilities should be maintained on a looseleaf basis. It would deal with what is known and what can be estimated with a relatively high degree of probability -- 60% or better. Principal staffing responsibility would rest with OSR. Anyone in the community could propose changes; these would be studied and formulated by OSR; the ONE Board and Staff would review them; if there was doubt or dissent, there would follow the usual coordination process; final approval would be accorded by the USIB (though this could be done in writing, rather than in formal meeting).

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification


The theory behind this is that these data are of sufficient importance to be "national intelligence" and therefore binding, but often of such detail that their inclusion in estimates of the type we do now dilutes both consideration of important (often technical) questions relevant to them and consideration of the broader questions of military policy which those estimates also address. Moreover, different analysts are properly involved; and in the existing process we tend to have compromise negotiators not really competent to handle either. Finally what we know and what we estimate and what we postulate and what we guess tend to be insufficiently delineated and convey an impression of much greater clarity and certainty of knowledge and judgment than exists.

II. An annual or semi-annual summary of Soviet/EE military capabilities should be published for senior policy makers. It would summarize the information in the looseleaf book. It would also state clearly what we know and what we don't know. It would, where possible, interpret these capabilities in terms of capacity to do, or not to do, certain things -- such as intervene in far-distant areas, destroy certain types of targets, etc.

III. An annual estimate of Soviet military policy should be prepared. This paper should consider the various strategies and options open to the USSR and take account of such evidence as there is (doctrines, developments in research and testing, etc.,) relevant to these various options. It can, and should, state the outside limits of Soviet policies (such as "a clear military superiority"), identify such policies as seem clear, and express views (even if there are dissenters) on what courses of action at the point of writing seem most likely. While the general dimensions of future force strengths might be discussed, the paper should avoid specific projections on a year-by-year basis of specific force goals.

IV. In addition to the above, we should do individual estimates on specific problems when necessary and appropriate. The SS-9 seems to me to be such a subject. The object should not necessarily be to arrive at specific answers to all questions; the object should be to shed light. If there are anomalies or uncertainties or sheer ignorance, they should be openly stated. If there are varying interpretations of the evidence, they should be disclosed. If there are important points regarding which the methodology, rather than the evidence, is crucial, the methodology should be

explained. In short, this method of dealing with current, critical issues will do much more to clarify the problem, and hopefully to prevent misuse of estimates, than continuation of the present omnibus system in which crucial elements of the estimating process are lost under the pressure of time.

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